Audience With The Keeper Of Wisdom

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I sat on the cobblestone bridge, listening to the ancient song of the rushing waters in the brook below and contemplating the day's events. I had awakened this morning with the strange anticipation and wariness that generally accompanies the prediction of important occurrences in one's life. All day, I had gone about my usual routine, waiting and watching for something out of the ordinary - but to no avail. There had been nothing of significance...just another normal day filled with the dull mundanity of household chores, grocery shopping and bill paying. Nothing more.

I let out a heavy sigh, and turned my attention to the sheep grazing in the lush meadow. I pondered their lives and wondered if they ever felt the same anticipation I had experienced this morning. I smiled at the foolishness of my thoughts, knowing full well that the creatures of the field were content enough in the simplicity which life had to offer - ample food and water was all they required. No, the peaceful flock below couldn't be bothered with such nonsense. Maybe I should follow their lead and just turn my thoughts to the more mundane side of life.

Looking down at my feet as they dangled over the rushing water, I became aware of the myriad of color that was reflected from the setting sun. Mesmerized by the beauty of the kaleidoscopic dance, I watched intently as the oranges, reds and purples whirled and twirled with each other on the surface of the brook. The rich shades of the sunset gradually faded into pastels and then, the iridescence of shimmering silver. An owl hooted nearby, jolting me fully back into reality. Good Goddess! Night had fallen! How long had I been there, lost in the absurdity of human thought? Obviously much too long, from the looks of things.

I hurriedly scrambled to my feet, shivering as I gathered my shawl about my shoulders. The night had turned cool and damp, and the misty veil of fog was rolling into the valley at a rapid pace. The delicate breeze of early day had been replaced a heavy west wind, and my hair was whipping about my face and shoulders. Great! There was going to be a storm, and here I was - in the middle of nowhere - likely to be caught in it!

As I neared the end of the bridge, I realized that it was too late. The fog had settled into a mist so dense and heavy, that I couldn't see my hand in front of my face. There was no use in searching for cover, as the visibility factor was nil. Aside from that, it was quite dangerous to wander blindly through the valley mists - even folks who knew the valley territory very well knew better than to try it. Several years earlier, one of the area residents had been caught in

the steamy vapors while in search of a missing lamb, and had been found hours later - miles from the valley - still wandering about looking for his home. I cursed under my breath as I settled back onto the bridge to wait out the fog.

No sooner than I'd gotten situated, the fog began to dissipate nearly as quickly as it had descended. The wind was still blowing in fierce gusts, but at least now, I reasoned, I should be able to find my way home. Without another thought, I hurried across the bridge and onto the path below. From the corner of my eye, I caught a glimpse of the silvery moonlight reflected on the water. Suddenly, I realized that something was wrong - genuinely wrong! The brook had ceased to run! Disbelieving, I rubbed my eyes and looked again. No, I wasn't seeing things! Despite the heavy winds and the decline of its course, the surface of the brook hadn't so much as a ripple. Goddess! The surface was as smooth as glass! Shock! That was it - I must be in shock! I began to conjure all sorts of excuses as to why my eyes were playing tricks on me.

But then...it happened! The winds began to blow from all four directions at once, their forces concentrated at the center of the still and lifeless brook. A bit of mist was caught up in the forces of the gale - twirling this way and that, becoming larger in size and stronger in density - until all at once, the winds were hushed in deathly silence. There She stood - a beautiful and terrible visage - atop the glassy water. Robed and Hooded. Dark and black. Faceless. It was She! The Devourer of Souls. The Keeper of Wisdom. She Who stirred the Cauldron of Rebirth. The Shapeshifter. I shivered in fear and anticipation.

From beneath the hood, She gazed upon me with the invisible eyes that saw all. Silently, She fixed Her eyes on mine and bade me not to turn away. Deeper and deeper into Her eyes I went. Deeper. Deeper still. A myriad of jewel-tone colors began to swirl in my very being - faster, darker, brighter - until I was the color and it was me! I began to feel ill. I knew I should turn away, but Her strength was such that I seemed incapable of the slightest movement. Just when I thought I would faint from terror, there was a tumultuous clap of thunder and I realized that it was too late. Goddess! My entire being had been consumed by Hers!

The world began to change around me, and I found myself suddenly back in time. I witnessed firsthand the Tale of the Taliesin - which heretofore I had always thought a mere fairy tale - and watched in horror as the Three Drops of Wisdom flew from the Cauldron and spilled onto Gwion Bach, imbuing him with infinite knowledge. I was taken on the frenzied chase between Cerridwen and Gwion, and felt my mortal body contort and twist with every shape that was shifted. As the greyhound, I tracked the hare who was Gwion. My muscles flexed again, and I dove into the water as the otter, chasing the salmon who just moments before, had been the hare. Gwion then took to the sky as a sparrow, and in flight, I swiftly pursued him as the hawk. I watched knowingly as Gwion, thinking himself quite safe, smugly turned himself into a single grain of wheat. And it was I, who in sorrow and pleasure, shifted into the black hen and supped upon that grain. I felt the swell of pregnancy and the pains of labor as I delivered the new-born babe. For the very first time, I began to understand...*really* understand!

Suddenly, I was once again caught up in the rapid whirl of color. There was a blinding streak of blue-black lightning and after a moment of excruciating pain, I was hurled forcefully from the essence of the Goddess and back into my own! So frightening and traumatic was this experience, I wasn't really sure whether I was alive or dead! I drew a long breath, blinked my eyes and gingerly flexed my toes. Apparently, I was all right and everything seemed to be working okay! I quickly dusted myself off and got to my feet.

We stood looking at each other - I from the bank, and She from her realm atop the water. Unexpectedly, She opened Her hand and held it out to me. Inside were three drops of liquid, sparkling like diamonds in the night. She tossed Her hand to the North, and one of the drops splashed into the water, forming a very large circle - the Circle of Causes and Necessity. I drank of its earthy waters and tasted the poignant flavor of lessons learned, as pieces of my life flashed before my eyes.

She cast a second drop to the West, and a smaller circle appeared: The Circle of Blessedness. As I carefully sipped of its waters, my spirit left my body and for a split second, stood on the water facing the Wisdom Keeper before re-entering its physical realm.

The third drop, She flung cautiously to the East. From it, too, a circle materialized - though much smaller than the rest: The Circle of the Infinite. As I bent to partake of its knowledge, She stopped me with Her upraised hand. I understood. Gently, I dipped my finger into the waters, and for a moment saw all the knowledge that is and ever will be!

At that very moment, She raised Her hands skyward and Her form shifted into that of a great red dragon. Opening Her arms, She moved to the South and lovingly gathered all three circles to Her breast. The winds gusted from all four directions again, their forces centered toward the spot where She stood. I watched as She twirled furiously in the wind and in a matter of seconds, She was gone. The winds died quickly to a gentle breeze. The brook which had been so deathly still, quickly burst forth with new life. All was as it had been.

It was just after daybreak, and the promise of a new beginning was well underway. I sat on the cobblestone bridge to contemplate with awe and wonder the night's events. I felt exhilarated, happy and humbled all at once! I had been visited by the She, The Stirrer of the Cauldron. I had been devoured and re-birthed again from Her body! I was newly alive with the mysteries she had unfolded to me! I finally understood! I jumped up from my seat and blew a kiss to the Triple Goddess in thanksgiving, then happily skipped across the bridge.

As I neared the path toward home, the sheep were being let into the meadow for their morning repast. One of them had strayed from the flock and seemed to be coming in my direction. I walked toward him in an effort to herd him back to the others, and as I grew near, he raised his head and looked at me. Stroking him gently, I looked into his eyes and saw a strange look - an odd look - a look of anticipation and wariness.

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